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ABSTRACT

Positive or negative attitudes toward the number of children a woman has are often thought to be related to ethnicity and religious background. It was hypothesized that Hispanics, when compared with Anglos, would place higher positive values on women with children than on women with no children and that religious identification with the Catholic Church would result in higher positive attitudes toward women with children regardless of ethnicity. Anglo Catholic (N=31), Hispanic Catholic (N=26), Anglo Protestant (N=61), and Hispanic Protestant (N=4) female college students completed a semantic differential to measure their attitudes toward number of children in three different narratives about women. An acculturation scale determined the ethnic and religious identification of the subjects. Analyses of results revealed no significant differences between attitudes towad number of children either as a function of Anglo or Hispanic culture, or Catholic or Protestant religion. These results indicated that within the total population sampled a tendency existed to want fewer children, and to place a higher value on women who have fewer children. The findings suggest that acculturation will result in fewer differences in current attitudes in general, including family size. (PAS)

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ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS FACTORS RELATED TO COLLEGE WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD NUMBER OF CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Positive or negative attitudes toward the number of children a woman has may be related to many variables. It is proposed in this paper that these attitudes may be related to ethnicity and religious background. Hispanic subjects are proposed to place higher positive values than Anglo subjects upon women with one or four children, than on women with no children. It is also hypothesized that religious identification with the Catholic Church results in higher positive attitudes toward greater number of children regardless of ethnicity. The subjects in this study were female students at the University of New Mexico enrolled in undergraduate psychology classes. A Semantic Differential was administered to measure attitudes toward number of children in three different narratives about women. Each story was rated on scales representing the Evaluative, Potency, and Activity dimensions. The stimuli were descriptive phrases of three women in different circumstances including number of children, i.e. one woman had no children, one had one child, and one woman had four children. An Acculturation Scale was used to determine the ethnic and religious identification of the subjects. This paper examines differences and similarities in attitudes toward number of children: (1) between Anglo and Hispanic subjects; (2) between Catholic and Protestant subjects. Dependent measures were scores on the seven-point Semantic Differential over three dimensions. The propositions that attitudes may be related to ethnicity and religious background were not confirmed, but a significant difference was found between the Evaluative dimension scores across the repeated measure of number of children in the narrative.*

INTRODUCTION

Women today have choices which their mothers did not have. They can work in non-traditional female jobs, can divorce without societal condemnation, and they can control their future childbearing plans with more certainty. Whereas their mothers may have taken a more passive role in accepting childbearing as an expected occurance in their life, women today can actively decide whether or not to bear children.

Many women decide to remain childless for reasons based

on career choice, marital status, personal and national economic conditions, opportunity, parenting fears, concerns about world population, physical limitations, unwillingness to accept responsibility for rearing a child, or the choice that accompanies the increased availability of oral contraceptives.

Religious dictates may also affect the way a woman views her choices. Religious background can either produce a conflict over the desire to remain childless, or can support the decision to bear children. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church prescribes strict codes concerning birth control, abortion, and the duty to procreate. Catholic women must consider this added factor when making decisions regarding childbearing.

Compared to the general population, it has been found that couples who have a Catholic religious background tend to want and have more children (Smith-Lovin and Tickamyer, 1978). Also, it has been found that among Catholics, more religious couples tend to want and have more children than less religious couples (Alvirez, 1973).

In the last twenty-five years, fertility rate differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants have become almost nonexistent. At one time there were considerable differences between religions and birth rate. For example, Lorimer (1954) found that there was little difference in fertility rates between Protestant and Catholic women with only elementary school experience. However, as the Protestant rate declined

by 45% with high school experience, and then another 19.5% with college experience, Catholic fertility rates declined only about 33% and 13% respectively (Lorimer, 1954). But, by 1976, Viel found that "in the United States, family size among the country's 40 million Roman Catholics is no larger than the family size of those who profess Protestant religions" (Viel, 1976, p. 170).

The Catholic Church has historically been the religious core of the Hispanic culture. Therefore, Hispanic Catholic women may view their childbearing options and expectations for the future in ways which differ from those of Anglo Protestant women and even from Anglo Catholic women. The theology of the major Protestant churches in this country places a high value on childbearing, but usually does not prohibit a married woman from making the choice not to have children.

There has been a continuous overall decline in fertility in the United States since 1957: from 23.7 births per 1000 population in 1960, 18.4 births per 1000 population in 1970, and 15.8 births per 1000 population in 1979 (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1980).

Cross-culturally, Sweet (1974) found that the Spanish fertility rate was 45% higher than the urban white fertility rate in 1957-60, and only 39% higher in 1967-70. Sweet also found that, for women with Spanish surnames in five southwestern states, the standardized fertility rate declined from .768 in 1957-60 to .537 in 1967-70, a decline of 30.1%.

Whereas, in the urban white population, the standardized fertility rate for the same periods declined by 26.8% (Sweet, 1974).

In New Mexico, the total population increased by approximately 28% between 1970 and 1980, while the Spanish surname population declined from 40.1% of the population in 1970 to 36.6% in 1980 (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1980).

As we can see, fertility rates are declining for the total population in the United States, regardless of religious affiliation or cultural identification. The decline is, however, much more apparent in the Spanish surname population.

As one approach to exploring this differential birth rate, differences in attitudes toward number of children will be addressed through this study. As already stated, positive or negative attitudes toward the number of children a woman has may related to many variables. It is proposed in this paper that these attitudes may be related to ethnicity and to religious background.

Hispanic subjects are proposed to place higher positive values than Anglo subjects upon women with one or four children than on women with no children. It is also hypothesized that religious identification with the Catholic Church results in higher positive attitudes toward greater number of children regardless of ethnicity.

This is proposed even though the Catholic birth rate per se is no higher now than the Protestant birth rate. This

study attempts to measure the attitudes toward number of children and not the fertility rate. It is hypothesized that Catholic subjects will still place a higher positive attitude on a greater number of children, even if they do not actually desire to bear a greater number of children, vis-à-vis identification with the Catholic Church.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects for this study were 122 female students at the University of New Mexico enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. Of these 122 subjects, 31 were identified as Anglo Catholic women, 26 as Hispanic Catholic women, 61 as Anglo Protestant women, and only four as Hispanic Protestant women.

Since it is difficult to separate the Hispanic culture from the Catholic Church in the Southwest, it is suggested that future studies in this area account for a cell containing more Hispanic Protestants than was possible for this study.

It was evident that the Hispanic subjects were already acculturated to some degree by the fact of their matriculation at a state university. However, the criteria of Spanish spoken in the home and readiness to identify oneself as Hispanic assured that the acculturation was only partial and relatively recent.

The average age was 29.00 years for the Hispanic subjects and 26.19 years for the Anglo subjects. When age was broken

down by religion, the average age was 27.15 years for the Catholic women, and 26.62 years for the Protestant women, with a combined total of 23 subjects who did not give their age on the questionnaire.

From the acculturation scale/personal information questionnaire, other descriptive statistics were generated. They include parental income by ethnicity and religion, and anticipation of having a child or children in the future by ethnicity, religion, and marital status.

In the review of the total group of subjects (N=122), it was found that of both the Anglo and Hispanic groups, the greatest number of subjects reported a parental income of over $20,000 per annum. However, in the Anglo group, 60% reported parental income in this category, while only 33% of the Hispanic subjects reported in this category.

The same was found for religion, with the differences being slightly lower. Of the Catholics, 46% reported in this above $20,000 category of parental income, while 60% of the Protestants fell into this category. And, with combined ethnic and religious identification, the pattern remained the same.

This indicates that the samples studied in this project were from homes where their parent's annual income was above $20,000. This is, admittedly, a high income bracket, and any results herein must be viewed with this in mind.

Also from the questionnaires the subjects completed,

it was found that approximately 56% of the Catholic women (n=57) indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future compared with 48% of the Protestant women (n=65).

And of the Anglo women (n=92) it was found that approximately 52% indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future, compared to 50% of the Hispanic women (n=30).

Combined ethnic and religious factors indicated that approximately 61% of the Anglo Catholic women (n=31) indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future, compared to 48% of the Anglo Protestant women (n=61). Fifty percent of the Hispanic women indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future, regardless of their religious identification with the Catholic Church or a Protestant religion.

Of the total group of subjects (N=122), 77 indicated that they were not married nor had they ever been married; 29 indicated that they were currently married; 11 indicated that they were divorced; three subjects were widowed; and two did not respond.

Of the 77 single women, 65% indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future, 96% of whom do not currently have any children. Of the 35% of single women who indicated that they did not anticipate having a child or children in the future, 81% did not already have children.

Of the 29 married women in this study, 28% indicated that they anticipated having a child or children in the future, 75% of whom do not currently have children. Seventy-two percent of the married women did not anticipate having any children in the future, 86% of whom indicated that they already had a child or children.

Within the group of divorced subjects, 27% indicated that they did anticipate having a child or children in the future, 67% of whom did not already have children. Of the 73% of divorced women who indicated that they did not anticipate having a child or children in the future, 88% indicated that they already had a child or children.

Of the total number of subjects (N=122), 34 subjects had a child or children at the time of testing, 84 subjects did not have children, and four did not respond to this question.

Testing Procedures

All testing was done by self-administration after the subjects received verbal and written instructions in groups as to the procedures to follow for completing the items in the study. Completion of all the questionnaires and forms entailed approximately 30 minutes for each subject. A standard consent form was obtained from each subject at the time of testing. The subjects were then given verbal and written instructions in the procedure for completing a Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957). The study was presented

to the subjects as one of evaluating reactions to women in stories.

A Semantic Differential was administered to measure attitudes toward number of children in three different narratives about women. The narratives were counter-balanced to approximate random assignment to subjects.

Three dominant dimensions of connotative meaning have been found to consistently appear across language and culture groups - Evaluation (E), Potency (P), and Activity (A) (Osgood, May, and Miron, 1975).

The Evaluative dimension on the Semantic Differential included 15 pairs of bipolar adjectives such as "good-bad", "successful-unsuccessful", "positive-negative", "rich-poor", and "happy-sad".

The Potency dimension contained such bipolar adjective pairs as "lazy-industrious", "dominant-submissive", and "strong-weak".

Analyses were not conducted on the Activity dimension.

The stimuli were descriptive phrases of three women in differing circumstances including age, occupation, length of time in job, marital status, and number of children, i.e. one woman had no children, one had one child, and one had four children. Each story was rated by the subject on seven-point scales representing 15 Evaluative, six Potency, and four Activity dimensions. These 25 bipolar adjective pairs were cross-factored to measure meaning in Spanish-American and American culture (Suci, 1960).

The subjects then wrote down ten things they anticipated would happen to them in the future, for example, "marriage, graduate from college, have a baby, but a home, etc."

In the final phase of testing, the subjects completed an Acculturation Scale which included questions concerning ethnic and religious identification, parental income, marital status, age, number of children, etc.

The procedures for scoring the three Semantic Differential scales per narrative are as follows: each narrative was scored independently on the Evaluative, Potency, and Activity dimensions. For each dimension, a mean score was derived for each subject with the number of bipolar adjective pairs as the denominator. The statistic F was used for making comparisons between groups.

RESULTS

Initial analyses indicated that differences between Protestant and Catholic women sampled were not significant regarding either the Evaluative or Potency dimension and attitude toward number of children in the narrative. Consequently, Catholic women were compared cross-culturally in the analysis of the Evaluative dimension.

The results in Table 1 show no significant difference between the Anglo Catholic and Hispanic Catholic women's attitude scores on the Evaluative dimension.

Table 2 shows the within subjects factor - number of children in narrative - and its interaction with ethnicity,

tested using the multivariate test for repeated measures. Although this test gives an approximate F, it does not use Sums of Squares between groups and Sums of Squares within groups as a conventional F test would use (McCall and Applebaum, 1973).

Table 1. Differences Between Anglo and Hispanic Catholic Subjects and Attitude Toward Number of Children on Evaluative Dimension.

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Ethnicity	806.79	1	806.79	3.88
Within Group	11427.21	55	207.77	

Table 2. Number of Children in Narrative and Its Interaction with Ethnicity - Within Group Variance.

Source	df	Approx. F
Number of Children in Narrative	2	6.43 *
Ethnicity by Number of Children in Narrative	2	2.17
Error	54	

* $p < .003$.

Also, even though there were no significant differences between the Anglo and Hispanic women regarding attitude to number of children, the results did show a significant difference between the Evaluative dimension scores across the repeated measure of number of children in the narrative (see Table 2). Contrasts for the means of number of children in the narrative were performed, and are shown in Table 3. There was also no significant interaction between ethnicity and the attitude score on the Evaluative dimension depending on the number of children in the narrative.

Table 3. Contrasts for the Means of Number of Children in the Narrative on Evaluative Dimension.

Source	SS	ErrorSS	MS	ErrorMS	F
Attitude to 0 Children vs 4 Children	1992.44	12420.64	1992.44	225.83	8.82 *
Attitude to 1 Child vs 4 Children	11.86	13824.14	11.86	251.35	.05
Attitude to 0 Children vs 1 Child	1696.86	9997.21	1696.86	181.77	9.34 *

df=1,55
Bonferroni Adjustment .05/3=.017.
* $p<.05$

The means for attitude to no children were significantly greater than the means for both attitudes toward one child and attitudes toward four children on the Evaluative dimension (Table 3 and Table 4). There was no significant difference between the means of attitude toward one child and attitude toward four children in the narratives.

Table 4. Mean Attitude Scores on Evaluative Dimension for Catholic Subjects.

Ethnicity	N	Attitude to 0 Children	Attitude to 1 Child	Attitude to 4 Children	Total
Anglo	31	71.13	68.22	68.68	69.34
Hispanic	26	79.88	71.38	69.85	73.70
All Subjects	57	75.13	69.67	69.21	71.33

DISCUSSION

Evaluative Dimension

Although the results showed no significant difference between the Anglo and Hispanic scores, there was a tendency for the Hispanic subjects to score higher than the Anglo subjects across all three levels of number of children (see Table 4). The Hispanic subjects consistently rated the narratives with a more positive attitude, regardless of the number of children depicted in the story.

As the results in Table 5 indicate, even though the

differences were not significant, the mean scores for the Hispanic women on this dimension did indicate that their highest positive attitude was for 0 children, then 1 child, and they had the lowest positive attitude for the narrative depicting four children.

Table 5. Mean Attitude Scores on Evaluative Dimension for All Subjects by Ethnicity.

Ethnicity	N	$\bar{X}$	s
Anglo:	92		
attitude to			
0 children		74.55	12.55
1 child		72.07	12.03
4 children		68.15	16.64
Hispanic:	30		
attitude to			
0 children		80.17	10.41
1 child		72.10	15.23
4 children		70.10	13.85

And, although the Hispanic mean scores consistently indicated more positive attitudes for all three levels of number of children than the Anglo scores, this pattern of decreasing positive attitude with increasing number of children was also duplicated in the Anglo subjects.

Also, initial analysis indicated that there were no significant differences toward attitude to number of children between all Catholics (n=57) and all Protestants (n=65) tested over either the Evaluative or Potency scales. This pattern was

not found for religion.

Table 6 indicates that the mean scores of the Protestant subjects was higher (more positive) toward 0 children and one child than the Catholic subjects. This was not the case on attitude toward four children. The Catholic mean score for attitude toward four children was slightly higher (more positive) than the Protestant score for that same measure. However, none of these tendencies were statistically significant.

Table 6. Mean Attitude Scores on Evaluative Dimension for All Subjects by Religion.

Religion	N	$\bar{X}$	s
Catholic:	57		
attitude to			
0 children		75.12	12.20
1 child		69.67	11.45
4 children		69.21	12.73
Protestant:	65		
attitude to			
0 children		76.65	12.36
1 child		74.18	13.66
4 children		68.12	18.43

Potency Dimension

No significant differences in attitude toward the three levels of children was found among ethnic or religious groups tested on this dimension. This could have been a result of the limited number (6) of bipolar adjective pairs included in this

Semantic Differential, and it is recommended that future studies increase this dimension.

However, the mean attitude score on this dimension did show that Hispanic subjects did have a more positive attitude (higher score) toward the narratives depicting 0 children or four children, than did the Anglo subjects.

This pattern was also found for religious identification. The Catholic subjects showed a more positive attitude toward 0 children or four children than the Protestant subjects (Table 7).

Table 7. Mean Attitude Scores on Potency Dimension for All Subjects by Ethnicity and Religion.

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	s
Anglo:	92		
attitude to			
0 children		28.15	5.69
1 child		27.93	6.06
4 children		27.50	6.87
Hispanic:	30		
attitude to			
0 children		30.57	6.22
1 child		26.93	6.65
4 children		29.63	7.08
Catholic:	57		
attitude to			
0 children		29.18	5.95
1 child		26.75	6.03
4 children		28.63	6.66
Protestant:	65		
attitude to			
0 children		28.37	5.86
1 child		28.51	6.28
4 children		27.49	7.21

CONCLUSION

Since no significant differences were found between attitude toward number of children as a function of Anglo or Hispanic culture, and Catholic or Protestant religion, it will be necessary to reevaluate the stereotypes commonly held about these groups. These findings indicate that within the total population sampled there is a tendency to want fewer children, and to place a higher value on women who have fewer children.

The stereotype that Hispanic women want and have more children is not indicated by this sample. Many questions remain to be answered: Would these same results hold true for samples of Hispanic women not in a university setting, where goals and values may be atypical of the culture at large? Would a different age group of respondents have produced different results? Would a larger sample of Hispanic Protestant subjects produced significant differences?

Our societal values and ideals are always in a state of change. Perhaps with the process of further acculturation and melding into a uniquely "American" culture, not necessarily based on culture of origin or religious preference, we will see fewer differences among our attitudes in general, including those of family size and childbearing decisions.

Since it was found that there is a significant difference within all groups between the attitude toward no children as compared to the attitude to one child or four children, this is an area which should be further investigated.

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